

physical and social sciences in the broadest sense of these terms including but not limited to research, extension and teaching activities concerned with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation, consumption, research, and development of food and agriculturally related products and services, inclusive of programs in agriculture, natural resources, aquaculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, home economics, rural development, and closely allied fields.

Graduate degree means a Master's or doctoral degree.

State means any one of the fifty States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.

Teaching activities means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience specific to the food and agricultural sciences and matters relating thereto conducted by colleges and universities offering baccalaureate or higher degrees.

§ 3402.3 Institutional eligibility.

Proposals may be submitted by land-grant colleges and universities, by colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, and by other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences. All applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one area of the food and agricultural sciences targeted for national needs fellowships, that have a significant ongoing commitment to the food and agricultural sciences generally, and that have a significant ongoing commitment to the specific subject area for which a grant application is made. It is the objective to award grants to colleges and universities which have notable teaching and research competencies in the food and agricultural sciences. The grants are specifically intended to support fellowship programs that en-

courage outstanding students to pursue and complete a graduate degree at such institutions in an area of the food and agricultural sciences for which there is a national need for the development of scientific and professional expertise. Therefore, institutions which currently have excellent programs of graduate study and research in the food and agricultural sciences dealing with targeted national needs are particularly encouraged to apply.

Subpart B—Program Description

§ 3402.4 Food and agricultural sciences areas targeted for national needs graduate fellowship grants support.

Areas of the food and agricultural sciences appropriate for fellowship grant applications are those in which developing shortages of expertise have been determined and targeted by HEP for national needs fellowship grant support. When funds are available and HEP determines that a new competition is warranted, the specific areas and funds per area will be identified in a FEDERAL REGISTER notice announcing the program and soliciting program applications.

§ 3402.5 Overview of National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program.

(a) The program will provide funds for a limited number of grants to support fixed graduate student stipends and fixed cost-of-education institutional allowances. These grants will be awarded competitively to eligible institutions. In order to encourage the development of special activities that are expected to contribute to Fellows' advanced degree objectives, the program will also provide competitive, special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances for a limited number of USDA Graduate Fellows.

(b) Based on the amount of funds appropriated in any fiscal year, HEP will determine:

(1) Whether new competitions for graduate fellowships and/or special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances will be held during that fiscal year;

(2) The graduate degree level(s) to be supported—Master’s and/or doctoral;

(3) The proportion of appropriations to be targeted for the fellowship stipends for each respective graduate degree level supported;

(4) The proportion of appropriations to be targeted for the cost-of-education institutional allowances for each respective graduate degree level supported;

(5) The proportion of appropriations to be targeted for the special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances for each respective graduate degree level supported;

(6) The allowable stipend amount for each respective graduate degree level supported, the cost-of-education institutional allowance for each respective graduate degree level supported, and the maximum funds available for each special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance for each respective graduate degree level supported; and

(7) The maximum total funds that may be awarded to an institution under the program in a given fiscal year.

(c) HEP will also determine:

(1) The maximum number of national needs areas for which funding may be requested in a single proposal;

(2) The degree levels for which funding may be requested in a single proposal;

(3) The minimum and maximum number of fellowships for which an institution may apply in a single proposal; and

(4) The limits on the total number of proposals that can be submitted by an institution, college, school, or other administrative unit.

(d) All of these determinations will be published as a part of the program announcement in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(e) For each USDA Graduate Fellow who desires to be considered for a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance, the project director must apply to HEP for a supplemental grant in accordance with instructions published in the program announcement in the FEDERAL REGISTER. Each application must in-

clude an “Application for Funding” (Form CSRS-661) and a “Budget” (Form CSRS-55).

(1) To provide HEP with sufficient information upon which to evaluate the merits of the requests for a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance, each application for a supplemental grant must contain a narrative which provides the following:

(i) The specific destination(s) and duration of the travel;

(ii) The specific study or thesis/dissertation research activities in which the Fellow will be engaged;

(iii) How the international experience will contribute to the Fellow’s program of study;

(iv) A budget narrative specifying and justifying the dollar amount requested for the travel;

(v) Summary credentials of the faculty or other professionals with whom the Fellow will be working during the international experience (summary credentials must not exceed three pages per person; “Summary Vita—Teaching Proposal” (Form CSRS-708) may be used for this purpose);

(vi) A letter from the dean of the Fellow’s college or equivalent administrative unit supporting the Fellow’s travel request and certifying that the travel experience will not jeopardize the Fellow’s satisfactory programs toward degree completion; and

(vii) A letter from the fellowship grant project director certifying the Fellow’s eligibility, the accuracy of the Fellow’s travel request, and the relevance of the travel to the Fellow’s advanced degree objectives.

(2) The narrative portion of the application must not exceed 10 pages, excluding the summary vita/vitae.

(f) All complete requests will be evaluated by professional staff from USDA or other Federal agencies, as appropriate. Evaluation criteria will be published in the program announcement in the FEDERAL REGISTER. Awards will be made to the extent possible based on availability of funds.

(g) Any current fellow with sufficient time to complete the international experience before the termination date of

the grant under which he/she is supported is eligible for a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance. Before the international study or thesis/dissertation research travel may commence, a Fellow must have completed one academic year of full-time study, as defined by the institution, under the fellowship appointment and arrangements must have been formalized for the Fellow to study and/or conduct research in the foreign location(s).

§ 3402.6 Fellowship appointments.

(a)(1) Fellows must be identified and fellowships must be awarded within 15 months of the effective date of a grant. Institutions failing to meet this deadline will be required to refund monies associated with any unawarded fellowship(s). Fellowship appointments may be held only by persons who enroll and pursue full-time study in a graduate degree program in the national need area and at the degree level supported by the grant.

(2) In addition, fellows:

(i) must be newly recruited;

(ii) must not have been enrolled previously in the academic program at the same degree level;

(iii) must be citizens of nationals of the United States as determined in accordance with Federal law; and

(iv) must have strong interest, as judged by the institution, in pursuing a degree in a targeted national need area and in preparing for a career as a food or agricultural scientist or professional.

(3) It will be the responsibility of the grantee institution to award fellowships to students of superior academic ability.

(4) A doctoral Fellow who maintains satisfactory progress in his or her course of study is eligible for support for a maximum of 36 months within a 45-month period. Master's level Fellows, maintaining satisfactory progress, are eligible for support for a maximum of 24 months during a 33-month period. However, it is the intent of this program that Fellows pursue full-time uninterrupted study or thesis/dissertation research, including time spent pursuing USDA-funded special international study or thesis/disserta-

tion research activities. For Fellows requiring additional time to complete a degree, it is expected that the institution will endeavor to continue supporting individuals originally appointed to fellowships through such other institutional means as teaching assistantships and research assistantships. For Fellows who complete the program of study early (less than 24 hours for Master's degree or 36 months for doctoral degree), the institution must refund any unexpended monies to the granting agency.

(b) Within the framework of the regulations in this part, all decisions with respect to the appointment of Fellows will be made by the institution. However, institutions are urged to take maximum advantage of opportunities for awarding fellowships to members of underrepresented groups at the graduate level in the food and agricultural sciences, particularly minorities and women. Throughout a Fellow's tenure, the institution should satisfy itself that the Fellow is making satisfactory academic progress, and carrying out, or planning to carry out, national needs related research. If an institution finds it necessary to terminate support of a Fellow for insufficient academic progress or by decision on the part of the Fellow, the Fellow becomes ineligible for future assistance under the program. If a Fellow finds it necessary to interrupt his or her program of study because of health, personal reasons, outside employment, or acceptance of an assistantship, the institution must reserve the funds for the purpose of allowing the Fellow to resume funded study any time within a 9-month period. However, a Fellow who finds it necessary to interrupt his or her program of study more than one time cannot exceed a total of 9 months' cumulative leave status without forfeiting eligibility. For fellowships terminated because of insufficient academic progress, a decision on the part of the Fellow, or reserved due to an interrupted program of study but not resumed within the required time period, unexpended monies must be refunded. Institutions may not use unexpended monies associated with a terminated fellowship to recruit and support a "replacement" Fellow.